

From
Ashes
by DSM

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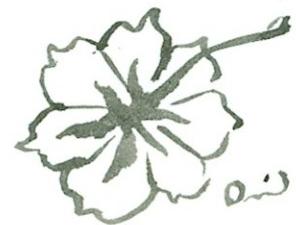
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For:
The M&Ms
and all our little ones,

Daut road,
and the Sundial
at large.



You don't know what hot is
until you survive a summer in
Redding. Some say summer days
in our hometown are the hottest
in the country—maybe even
the world! Every year, we watch
the thirsty grass wither and
dry into fields of golden bristles.
At mid-day they melt away with
the roads into the horizon.

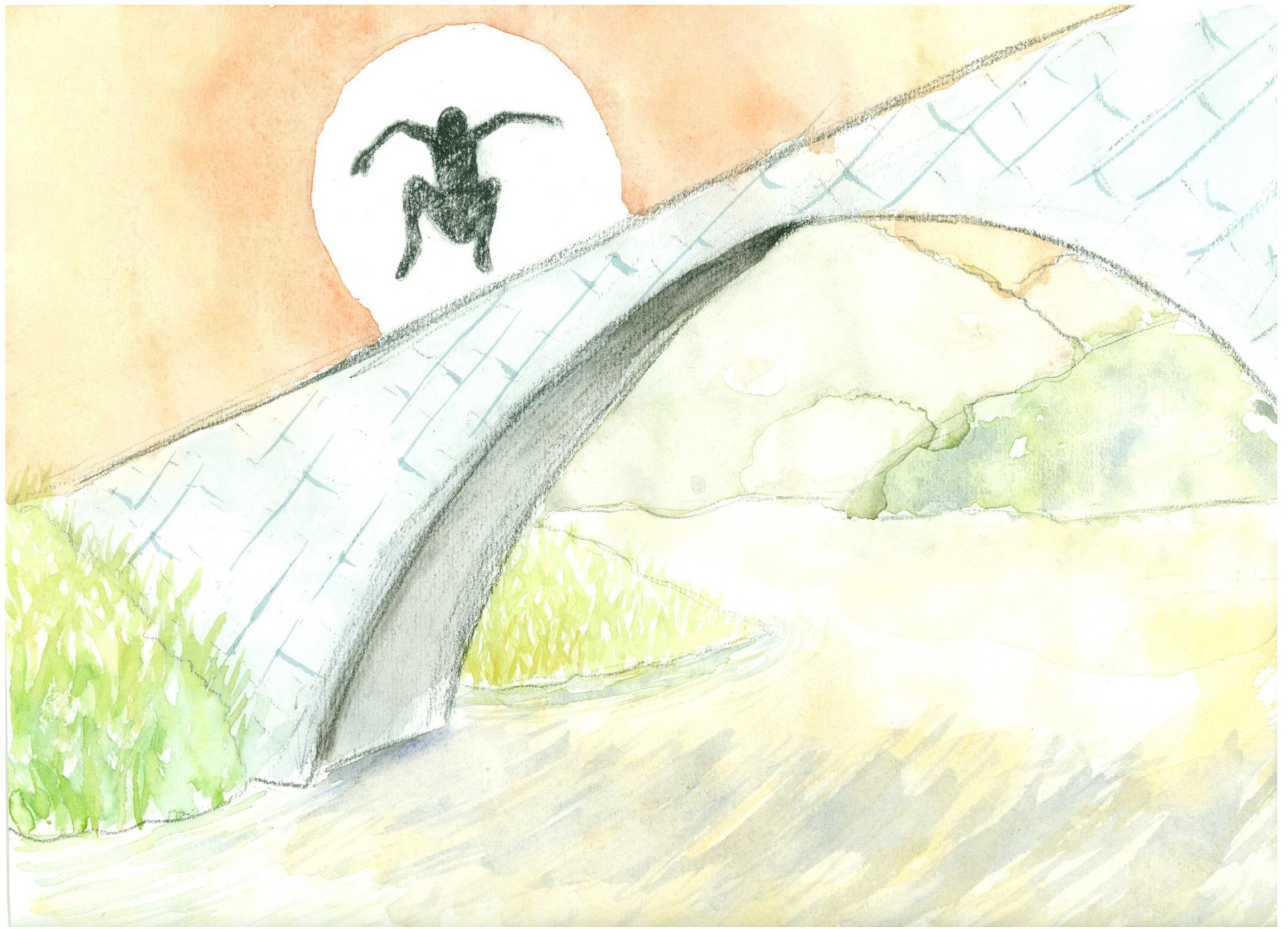


IF you plan to visit Redding, you'd better have a good pair of Sandals, because the Sidewalk gets so hot that you could cook your breakfast on it! (But I wouldn't recommend it...) In a place where the daytime temperature seldom drops below triple digits, it's important to know how and where to avoid the heat.



On the hottest days, we usually spend our time swimming in the crisp, cold river or jumping off the bridge into the lake.

Sometimes we'll have 'tea parties' underwater... that's where we sink to the bottom holding onto heavy rocks. We have some of our best conversations down there.



In the evening, the sun falls behind
the mountains, and while it is cool
outside we wander the creek beds
and groves foraging for fruits and
berries. Blackberries are my favorite.
We proudly wear their purple-red
stains like badges — summer just
isn't summer without them.



The grove has always been our favorite place to play; especially in summer. We would spend the long summer days there hiding out in the shade. We built our forts there in the oak trees and blackberry bushes... far away from the adults. It was our own little world. We made it into whatever we wanted. In summertime we were free. We lived like kings in the bounty of the season, until one year when summer was changed forever overnight.



Angry Storm Clouds came billowing
in over the tops of the Mountains.
The earthshaking roar of thunder
woke us from our beds. We were
all so impressed by the streaks
of lightning that danced outside
our windows, that we even made
Popcorn to enjoy the Show.



We woke up the next morning with puffy eyes and scratchy throats. The sound of helicopters chopping through the hazy sky pulsed inside our stuffy heads. Before we could even eat our breakfast, firefighters arrived in swarms to evacuate us from our home. We were given only enough time to pack a change of clothes.



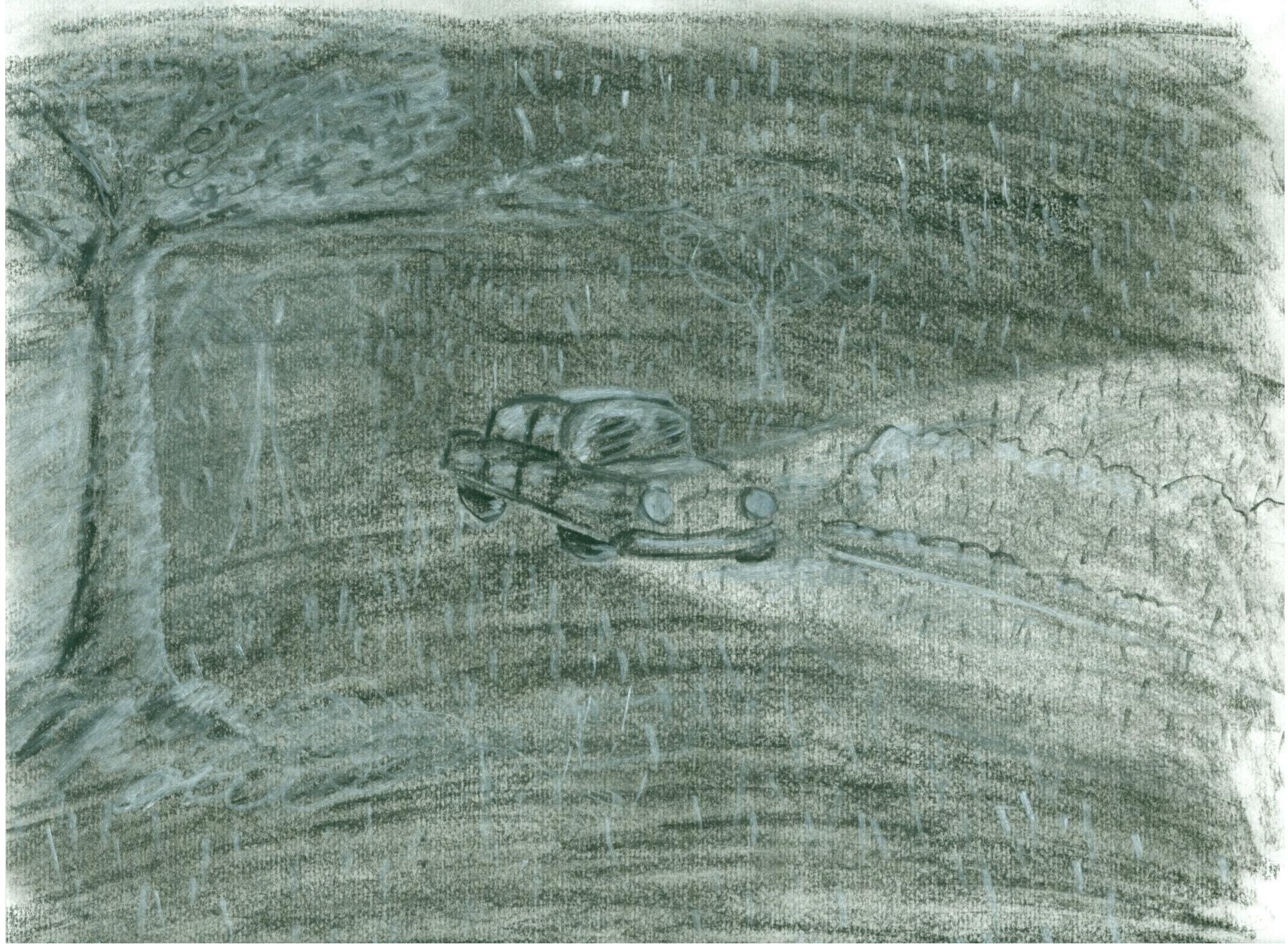
wildfires quickly devoured the
Mountains



We stayed at Aunty's house that night. We were all a little scared, but we were sure that we could return home the next day. But we didn't. The smoke got thicker—so thick that the Sun became a fiery red dot in the sky. I stared at it, and it stared back eerily. I started to worry about what was happening to the Forest. To our home.



Days went by and we still weren't allowed to return home. The smoke was too heavy outside to breathe, so we stayed indoors most days. Sometimes it would rain ash, and it would gather on the trees like snow. We played in it at first, but I wondered if that ash came from a tree in our grove; then it wasn't fun anymore.



We Started to get restless and worried,
So one windy day when the air
Cleared some, we went for a swim
to raise our spirits. It was hard to
do anything without losing our breath.
I couldn't even hold mine long enough
for a 'tea party.' Feeling defeated,
we sat on the lakeshore watching the
silver water ripple in the wind.
nobody else was playing there. The
lake seemed lonely to me. Every
now and then a helicopter would
come to pay it a visit, but only to
fill its buckets and return quickly
to where the fire was eating the
trees.



After our disappointing trip to the lake, we wandered through the neighborhood hoping to find some fruits to make a pie. We were so excited to find big, blushing peaches, bulging figs, plums, and even blackberries! But they weren't the same. The peaches weren't juicy, the figs were mealy, the plums were sour, and the blackberries shriveled. They didn't even stain my fingers with that special dye I was always so proud to wear. The fruit trees must have been just as worried as us — maybe they knew the danger their friends were in.



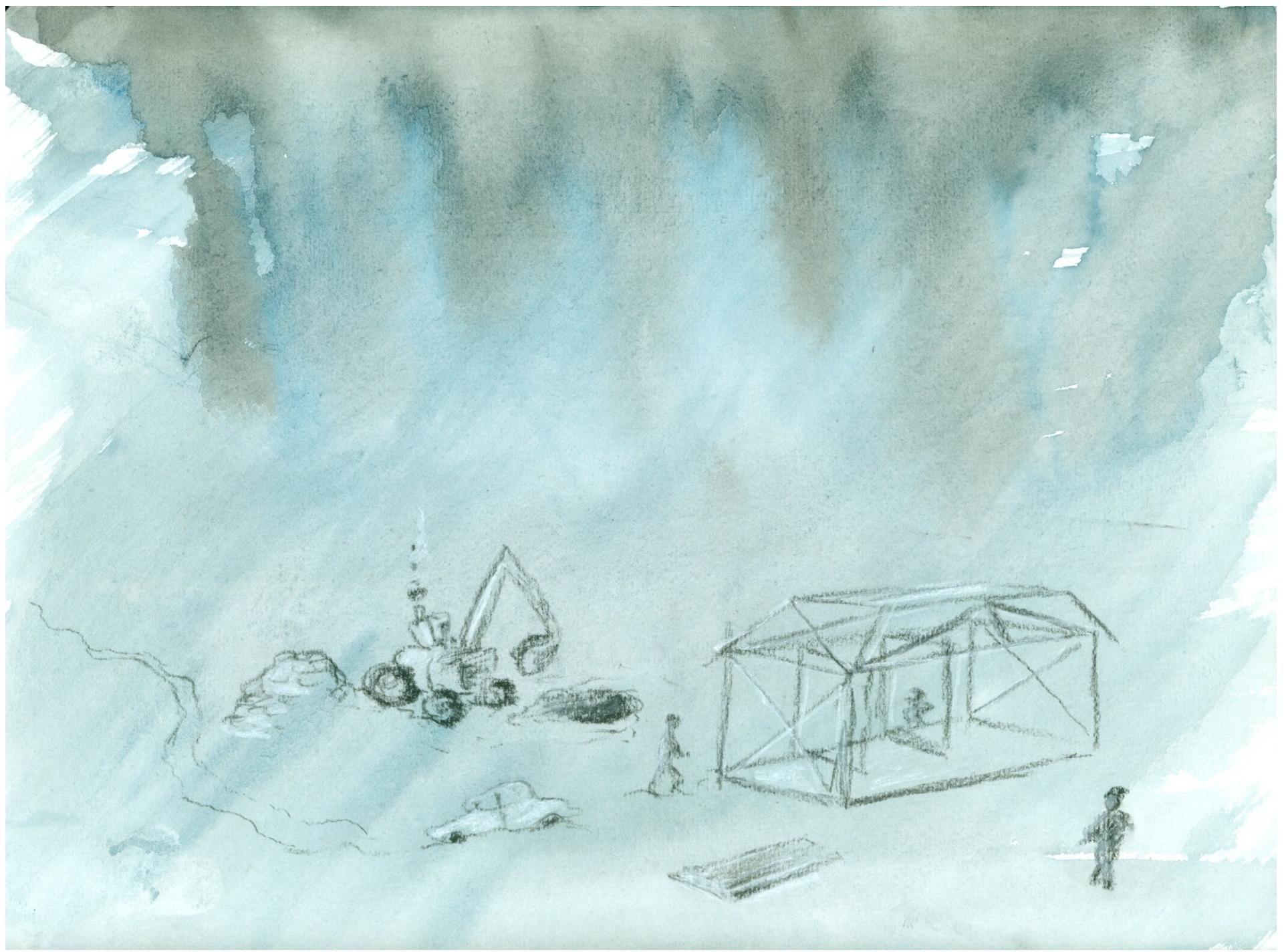
Summer dragged on, and even though Firefighters came from all over the state, the fires kept burning. Eventually we heard that our house had been burned down. We didn't even cry... our hope had been broken long before we found out.



Eventually Autumn came, and with it the first rains. Before too long the weather started to smother the fires. The air was clean again, but the damage revealed itself. Our poor creek-bed had been stripped of its beautiful old-growth grove. Our forts were long gone, and all that was left was an ashly, muddy stream. Part of me thought that just maybe at least one oak tree would survive, but not even a blade of grass remained. Our grove was gone, forever.



During the Winter we started to rebuild our house. The cold rain turned our yard into a mudpit, and made it hard to build. It seemed like it would never be finished, but just as the first signs of Spring came, we were ready to move back in.



After a long winter, everyone was eager to be outside again. The weather was warm, flowers were blooming, and grass had started to grow over our muddy yard. Home didn't quite feel the same, but still everyone was in good spirits. After unpacking a few things, we decided to go for a stroll to the old grove, for old time's sake. When we arrived, we couldn't believe our eyes...



The creekbeds and hillsides were covered with wild flowers—every kind you could imagine! Lupins, poppies, daisies, Marigolds, periwinkle! The flowers were all teeming with bustling bees and butterflies gathering their sweet nectar and scattering their pollen. It was like they were all eagerly working to rebuild our cherished grove again.



In our excitement we ran through the grasses,
playing hide-and-go-seek, and pretending to
be adventurers on a Safari Somewhere.
We played until we could barely breathe, and
Started to head home just before the sun
Went down. Just before we left, I noticed
a Flower I didn't recognize. Curious, I
gently dug it up from the soft soil to
bring to Mom.



Mom and Pop were overjoyed to hear about the new "grove." We ate a special dinner, and afterward I showed my new flower to Mother. "Oh, well I've never seen a flower like this before," she said, "what should we call it?"

"How about, Wildfire Flower?" I replied.



The
End





Ramble & Rhyme
Seoul